

Ivan Tyrrell

THE

SURVIVAL

OPTION

A Guide to Living

Through Nuclear War

Facts, not emotion...

should be in every

home in the country!

Doris Lessing

The Guardian

Illustrated

Nuclear War Survival as a Taboo Subject

Imagine yourself just before a nuclear war. In a few hours or days the United Kingdom is to be heavily bombed because, per head of population, it is one of the most densely targeted countries in the world. Your instincts scream self-preservation. You quickly realise that, if you wish to contribute to any possible future, your only hope will be to get underground with family and friends. You also realise that those who have made the most advanced preparations stand the best chance of surviving. The Government, the aristocracy and the military have shelters, paid for out of taxes, but you don't. And, in your desperate haste to find or build a makeshift shelter, you will hardly have time to ask why. Why did successive British governments not prepare public protection against the effects of nuclear weapons?

In answer to this question the State's usual sophistry is to say that we are protected - by our armed forces. There is no need to worry. Deterrence, so the theory goes, is our defence. It is all the defence we need and the stronger we become the less likely we are to be attacked. But this is a hollow argument, for two main reasons. First, the presumed enemy doesn't believe in the theory. The USSR has always thought it could survive a nuclear war and has planned accordingly. (Mutual Assured Destruction - MAD - was an idea peculiar to the West alone.) The second reason is that the only defence against nuclear weapons is shelters. Any enemy can see we have no civil defence. They therefore know we are bluffing, that our ultimate threats are empty.